



**Appropriations Committee
Thursday, February 17, 2022**

**House Bill 5037: AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM
ENDING JUNE 30, 2023**

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France, and members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Stacey Zimmerman, I am testifying on behalf of SEIU CT State Council. SEIU represents over 65,000 public and private sector members. My testimony will be in regards to the budgets for the State Contracting Standards Board and the Office of Early Childhood:

The State Contracting Standards Board was established in 2007 after 15 years of advocacy to bring real oversight and transparency to state contracting. This Board's formation was part of a bipartisan response to the Rowland scandals the years previous involving state contracts that eventually landed a Governor and others in Federal Prison. The Board and other measures were part of an extensive ethics and watchdog clean government reform package.

The failure of the current and previous administrations to prioritize and in some instances cut funding for the Board has been not only disheartening but potentially dangerous to the public's trust.

It only takes a glance at the headlines to understand that now more than ever the boards checks and balances of state funded subcontracting is needed. It only takes one rotten egg to spoil the whole basket so doesn't it make sense to look at them before they've been placed in it?

With billions of dollars already coming into Connecticut through federal legislation passed in response to the ongoing pandemic and billions more coming as part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Deal, now is the time to give the Board the tools and resources it needs to continue providing the crucial oversight for which it was created.

The State Contracting Standards Board received an appropriation in the [budget adopted last session](#) that would have allowed it to fill five positions, *finally*. The five positions - Chief Procurement Officer, Staff Attorney, Accounts Examiner, Research Analyst and Trainer - will allow the Board to truly live up to its mission, "to require that state contracting and procurement requirements are understood and carried out in a manner that is open, cost effective, efficient and consistent with State and Federal statutes, rules and regulations."

The Chief Procurement Officer is a statutory position that remained vacant after the current Chief Procurement Officer left State Service and the position was defunded. The other positions are new to the Board. Currently, the Board has one employee, its Executive Director, David Guay. Unfortunately, this funding was ultimately cut from the budget. This funding should be restored and the positions on the Board need to be filled while its critical enforcement authority - such as the ability to nullify bad contracts - is protected and maintained.

With a limited budget and staff, the Board has always done important work. Now is well past time to fully fund it.

Child Care

First, SEIU would like to publicly thank The Commissioner of Early Education, Beth Bye. Her department was one of, if not the best agency or department to deal with during the pandemic. With her leadership Connecticut parents and children were able to maintain quality safe childcare. That is why it makes no sense to reward such a successful pandemic operation with a cut.

Governor Lamont's proposed budget fails to provide adequate support for childcare providers and parents. \$100 million does not begin to address the childcare crisis that has been exacerbated by the pandemic.

Connecticut is beginning to recover from the past two years of chaos, cutting the access to childcare will hamper that recovery as we move forward. Childcare workers and the Office of Early Childhood made great strides in a difficult environment. Now is the time to continue that momentum as we head into a new world post pandemic. These cuts must be restored. This is a big part of a Recovery for All.